

## JOHN WESLEY WITT SR.

John Wesley Witt was born in McLeansboro, Hamilton County, Illinois, on February 10, 1829. He was the son of Robert and Dorcus Willis Witt, who became identified with the Mormon Church soon after it was organized. He was the second child of the family of five: Kizzie Ann B., John Wesley, Sarah Jane B., William B. and Mills, who died in infancy. His father died when he was but four years of age.

John Wesley was baptized a member of

acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, having lived with the Hyrum Smith family several years. He viewed the bodies of these two brothers after their martyrdom at Carthage jail.

He was one numbered among the many saints to be persecuted and driven out of Nauvoo in 1846, and for the next four years worked on river steamers up and down the Mississippi River.

In 1850 he emigrated to Utah and on March 27, 1851, was married to Lovina Bigelow. His records show the marriage took place about 16 miles north of Salt Lake City, which would be near Farmington or Kaysville.

Lovina Bigelow Witt was the mother of 13 children, seven boys and six girls. They were Lucy Lovina, John Wesley Jr., Robert Nahum, Anna Udora, Nancy, Louisa, Mary Susanna, Daniel Brigham, Sarah Elizabeth, Milton Musser, Alphonso Moroni, Franklin Leo, Dorcus Marion and Jesse Monroe.

Soon after their marriage they moved to Provo, Utah, where John Witt claims to have built the first adobe house in that city.

In the spring of 1859 he and his small family set out from Provo to pioneer Heber Valley in Wasatch County. Their family by this time consisted of five small children, the youngest being an infant just 13 days old. The way was very hard and over almost impassable trails following the winding Provo River. In some places the snow obliterated even the faint trail and made the trip extremely hazardous. At one turn the wagon, with all its contents, tipped over into the swirling waters of the river. Working quickly, Uncle Daniel Bigelow helped lift the wagon box off the family and snatched up the 13-day-old infant as it began floating down the stream. They sal-

vaged what they possibly could, but everything was lost except a bake oven, one sack of flour, and a chest of clothing. However, their spirits were undaunted as they gathered together what was left and courageously continued on their journey. They arrived in Heber Valley on April 29, 1859, and were among the first three or four settlers to locate there. Their first home was a rude dugout. These pioneer families considered it wise to locate in a central place and to build their cabins in fort shape, to protect them from wild beasts and savages. A large corral was made in Cluffs Hollow, where most of the cattle were guarded at night. In the daytime they were herded on the surrounding hills. In the center of the fort a meeting place was erected which served for all purposes. Nineteen families celebrated the Christmas of 1859 in Heber Valley.

In the main, these early people were not farmers, but good farmers they became. They were not military men, but soldiers they were forced to be.

Early in the settlement of the valley, trouble in the form of Indian raids began to worry the settlers. By the spring of 1866 nearly every able-bodied man in the county was engaged in active military service.

One of the first men to be appointed to active military duty was John Wesley Witt. His ability to direct men and operations was such that he was commissioned a major in the Wasatch County militia. Under his command were cavalry men who scouted the mountains for signs of hostile Indians. These raids and uprisings and attacks were part of the activity of the Blackhawk War.

Those were days of wildest romance and adventure in that isolated mountain valley of the Wasatch.

When the county was organized, February 22, 1862, John Witt was appointed probate judge by the territorial Legislature. He, in turn, appointed three more men and they were known as the county court. He held this position from 1862 until the first day of June, 1888 (26 years).

It was during Judge Witt's administration of public affairs that the most important events in the history of Wasatch County occurred.

Crops were planted and harvested con-

trary to the prediction that the climate was too severe, and thriving settlements were established in fertile parts of the valley.

It was also during this period that the inhabitants of the county endured hardships and privations known only or realized by pioneer settlers of a new country. Many lived in dugouts or dirt-roofed houses and ate bread when it was to be had, and went without where they could not get.

John Witt was in reality the head man in all political, municipal and business affairs in the settlement and county. He owned the first store in Heber and operated the first post office there. He not only held municipal offices, but was active in ecclesiastical work as well.

In the beginning the entire Heber Valley came under one ward. This ward was organized in 1861, with Joseph S. Murdock as bishop and John Witt as counselor. He was a brother-in-law to Brigham Young, whose wife was a sister of Lovina Bigelow Witt. Whenever President Young or other Church authorities came to Heber they were entertained at the home of John Witt. He remained true and faithful to the gospel and was a high councilman when he died. He also belonged to the prayer circle in Salt Lake.

On November 1, 1869, he married a second wife, Martha Taylor. To them were born six sons, making 19 children in all. These sons were Joseph William, John E., James Taylor, Thomas Alma, Charles and David.

On Sunday, June 30, 1907, this pioneer settler, judge and soldier laid down the cares of this life at the age of 78 years and was buried in Heber City Cemetery.

He was a man of strong convictions and one who united sound common sense with candid outspoken frankness. He was imminently fitted to mould the rude elements of pioneer society into form and consistency. His personality aided in raising to a higher standard of citizenship the population of this valley. His name will go down to posterity as among the greatest of Wasatch County citizens, as an affectionate husband, a loving father, a splendid citizen and a good neighbor. The Witt name is known for good, for achievement and for strength throughout Wasatch County.

## LOVINA BIGELOW WITT

Lovina Bigelow Witt was born on March 24, 1834, at Grimsby, Cole County, Illinois, and died November 5, 1900, at Heber City.

Lovina Bigelow Witt was the daughter of Nahum and Mary Gibbs Bigelow. She was born March 24, 1834, at Coles County, Illinois, where she lived with her parents, brothers and sisters on a farm in a hewed log cabin with a puncheon floor, not sawed boards, but split from big trees and hewed off. Here they were comfortable. They had sheep, oxen, cows, pigs and horses. They had some sugar trees and made sugar in the spring from sweet syrup.

About October, 1836 or 1837, the first Mormon Elders visited her parents. They were Elders Coombs, Dibbius and David Gamett. The Bigelow family were converted to this new gospel and moved to Nauvoo in the fall of 1843.

They bought land at Camp Creek, near Nauvoo, and began to farm. It was here Nahum Bigelow and family went through mobbings and persecution. It was here their spring of water was poisoned, when a bottle of the water was analyzed and shown to contain enough poison to kill 10 men. They were warned not to use the water when they saw a green scum on top of the spring. They moved to Nauvoo for protection and after the excitement and mobbings quieted down, President Young told the brethren to go back and secure their crops, and it was here at Camp Creek that a neighbor, James Porter, persuaded Nahum to drink a cup of coffee, saying it would warm him up. He didn't want the coffee, but hated to hurt his neighbor's feelings, and as soon as he drank it became violently ill, but was administered to by Brother Patten and another man. He then vomited, thus getting rid of the poison. The Elders promised him he should get well and spoke in tongues, saying he would live and go to the Rocky Mountains and establish his family there. He did.

It also was at Camp Creek that James Porter and another man told the Bigelow family that the mob was coming to burn their house and kill old Bigelow and all his family. They did not feel safe, so they hid everything of value and took their bedding and made their beds in the corn fields

near the bean patch, where they had pulled the beans up. Everything was dark about the beds, so the mob couldn't see, for it was cloudy. After prayers were said they laid down fully dressed, but didn't sleep, as they kept watching and listening. Soon they heard firing and loud shouting at the house and were thankful they were hidden. Lovina said, "We lay still and prayed silently." They yelled and set the bloodhounds on our tracks, but the Lord preserved us. We could hear and see the dogs running around and the mob racing through the corn fields in search of us. We got up in the night and moved our beds in the hollow. Father and Hyrum leaned on the fence and watched. The mob left about 3 a.m. and father and brother Hyrum came back to bed. When daylight came, father went to see what had been done. The house was still standing, but the windows were broken and horses' tracks were all around the house. This was the same time the spring of water was poisoned. We were the only family molested and we wondered why.

Nahum Bigelow, true to the

who went into the homes with Sister Mary Crook and Sister Hatch, first wife of President Abram Hatch, to comfort and help the bereaved and to prepare the dead for burial.

She was the mother of 13 children, namely: John Wesley Jr., Robert Nahum, Anna Udora, Nancy Louisa, Mary Susanna, Daniel Brigham, Sarah Elizabeth, Milton Musser, Alphonso Moroni, Franklin Leo, Dorcas Marion and Jesse Monroe.

Lovina Bigelow Witt died November 5, 1900, from pneumonia, at her home in Heber City. It was her request to hold services at home and not remove her body until she was taken to the cemetery. She was buried November 8, 1900, in Heber Cemetery after services at her home.

Lucy Bigelow also married Brigham Young. She was the mother of Susa Young Gates, Mabel Sanborn, and a daughter Doria.